

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #24

Romans 7:1-6

When it comes to the spiritual life, there are many believers who are wasting away in prison. They are bound to rules, regulations, laws and legalism. Oh, they will tell you they know Jesus and they have been set free in Jesus, but when you watch their lives, they do not develop in freedom; they are right back under the bondage of the law. Romans 10:4 says, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN SET FREE FROM THE LAW BY JESUS CHRIST, WE SHOULD BE SERVING GOD WITH A NEW DYNAMIC QUALITY OF SPIRITUAL ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS.

If we are trying to govern our spiritual lives by some legal code, as a believer, we are spiritually rotting away. We have been set free from the law. We died to the law when Christ died on that cross. There are four theological premises that Paul develops:

THEOLOGICAL PREMISE #1 – The law dominates for life. **7:1**

The basic message of this verse is crystal clear; apart from Christ, the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as the person lives. The word “jurisdiction” is one that means to have authority or dominion. The tense of the verb is present, meaning as long as the person lives, the law continues to dominate or have authority over that person.

Now what all need to know is that the law does not dominate a person in a positive sense before God.

1. It closes every mouth. 3:19a
2. It establishes every person's guilt and accountability. 3:19b
3. It establishes every person's sinfulness. 3:20
4. It shows every person he deserves God's wrath. 4:15

As long as a person lives, God's law is keeping a record of every law failure. The law has total jurisdiction over a person before God and when that person gets before God, based on the law, he will hear - “You are guilty.”

THEOLOGICAL PREMISE #2 – The law ends at death. **7:2-3**

One of the real difficulties with this illustration is as Boice said, trying to figure out, exactly to which law is Paul referring (*Romans*, Vol. 2, p. 716). We agree with Dr. Boice who said, “Most commentators are agreed that ‘the law’ referred to in Romans 7 is law in general and not the Old Testament Law specifically” (*Ibid.*, p. 717).

When Paul wrote Romans, it was a Roman world and it was a man's world. During this first century, a man could get rid of his wife for the following reasons: 1) Spoiling dinner ; 2) Going into public with an uncovered head; 3) Entering into a conversation with another man ; 4) Speaking disrespectfully of her husband's parents ; 5) Burning the bread ; 6) Being childless for 10 years; 7) Being quarrelsome . Any one of these was grounds for a man to get rid of his wife.

However, the woman had no rights at all. In fact, if she were to get out of the marriage, regardless of her reason, she was branded an adulteress for life .

J. Dwight Pentecost writes: "Women had become a mere chattel (piece of movable property) of man, subject to his inhumane and cruel treatment" (p. 355).

Josephus, the famed Jewish historian writes, "It is lawful for a husband to depart and remarry, but a wife, if she departs from her husband cannot of herself be married to another" (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 327).

Gerhard Kittle, one of the foremost, exegetical researchers to ever study the Greek language, in studying Greek culture observed that "fidelity is demanded in the wife alone."

Paul is not giving his Biblical perspective of marriage or divorce and remarriage. As Douglas Moo said, he is not teaching on marriage and divorce, he is teaching a theological point (*Commentary On Romans*, p. 221). He does that in I Corinthians 7. He is not discussing the O.T. Law's view of marriage and divorce and remarriage, which says a woman can remarry (Deuteronomy 24:2), nor is he discussing Christ's teachings which allows for divorce in the case of adultery (Matthew 5:32). Paul is simply making a point by using a first century historical illustration from the Roman world - namely the only chance a woman has to be free from her marriage is if her husband died .

Now don't lose sight of what he is illustrating here - because what he is clearly illustrating is that the only way you and I can beat the law is by death . We have broken God's law and the penalty is death. The point of **verse 1** is that the law dominates our life as long as we live . The question comes, how can we ever beat the law? The answer is, we must die ! In order for us not to be dominated by the condemnation of the law, we must be dead .

THEOLOGICAL PREMISE #3 – Jesus Christ made us dead to the law . **7:4-5**

Positionally speaking, the moment we trusted Jesus Christ, we were made dead to the law . The verb "made to die" is passive , which means the whole action was God's judicial work. The moment we trusted Jesus Christ, we were so linked and identified with Jesus Christ that He made us dead to the law and alive unto God. Paul said in Colossians, "having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

Do you grasp this point? The law of God is dead to you and now you are married to Jesus Christ by faith and if you try to go back under the law, you are adulterating the Grace of God.

Now we may notice one reason why God made us dead to the law - “that” (7:4b) we might bear the fruit for God.” What an amazing thing for one who comes to faith in Jesus Christ. Instantly one is freed from an unfruitful marriage to the law and in a fruit-producing union with Jesus Christ.

We cannot bear fruit for God when we are under the law. In fact, it is impossible for one to bear fruit who puts himself back under the law because the law is designed to condemn, not produce fruit. But once one believes on Jesus Christ fruit production begins.

May I say that we may not exactly see the fruit God produces through a justified believer, but there will be fruit.

There is a great story from the life of Donald Grey Barnhouse that illustrates this point. He was at a luncheon of ministers and one of them remarked how frigid a particular denomination was and that any person in that denomination didn't seem to accomplish anything for God. Barnhouse said there once was a scholar in the Methodist denomination who was trained in a seminary and ordained to the ministry who seldom preached publicly and seldom went to prayer meeting to pray. In fact, he would be gone from his home church for weeks at a time. He was a bookworm who spent many hours in the library and he was unrestrained and overindulgent in some of his habits. This man lived this way for more than twenty years. Barnhouse then said to the ministers, what is your opinion of such a man. All the ministers said he was no credit at all to the ministry and God had not used him to bear any fruit. The conversation turned in another direction and Dr. Barnhouse asked them about their libraries and their study books in their libraries. He asked them what concordance did they use and many said they seemed to prefer Strong's Concordance. Barnhouse then said the man that you just said was no credit to the ministry was James Strong, the author of the very concordance that many of you use. They got the point and we need to get the point. God's ways of producing fruit may not be the way we see it, but those who are set free from the law will bear fruit.

One might ask then, why did God give the law and what does it do for me?

Paul answers that question in **verse 5** - the law stirred up our sinful passions which then caused us to sin and to do things which deserve death.

THEOLOGICAL PREMISE #4 – Jesus Christ has delivered us from the law. **7:6**

That word “release” is one that means to make barren or to take away the strength of something to the point that it is abolished. We could say it means to destroy something by taking away its strength.

In the shadow of the cross we are delivered from the law - 1) We can never be guilty; 2) We cannot ever experience God's wrath; 3) Our sins are gone.

The results of this are twofold:

1. We should serve God with a new vital spiritual life - a new dynamic of attitudes and actions. **7:6a**
2. We should not serve God in the old letter of the law. **7:6b**

If we choose to put ourselves under the law, we are killing our spiritual lives. The law kills us; Christ gives us life. The law puts us in bondage and Christ sets us free.